

# WITNESS for JUSTICE

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## Looking Out for Each Other

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The weather has been at the center of news headlines during the last few days and weeks. Challenging weather conditions have hit everywhere. From where I sit in Cleveland we have seen a solid week of low temperatures and wind chill which resulted in school and office closures.

In the midst of these weather crises, I am heartened to see the extraordinary response of thousands of people who have reached out to care for their neighbors who need assistance, many of whom are the most vulnerable in our communities. As neighborhoods throughout the nation have struggled to cope, our emergency crews, police, fire fighters, and road workers have demonstrated outstanding care and attention.

While many of us in the East have battled the cold, a drought is gripping California, bringing the state to its knees and causing the governor to establish water conservation strategies. Even the most recent rain fall and snow storms in the Sierra Mountains will not be a quick fix for this dilemma. Governor Brown is pleading with residents to limit their consumption to essential needs. There are some industries, such as hospitals that can do some of that, but in reality it is very difficult to reduce sanitation procedures and maintain adequate standards of care. Those most vulnerable are people who flood to emergency rooms in search of every day medical care. We must commend medical professionals who continue to brave the crowded conditions and serve all their patients.

The unexpected cold snap that powdered snow and freezing rain onto the streets and highways in places like Atlanta and Birmingham have stunned the whole region. The scene of cars and transport trucks sliding and crashing into one another as people did their best to get home was frightening. Many had to

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abandon their vehicles after sitting in traffic jams for long hours in an effort to get home. Even in that time of stress, the front-page of the newspaper showed hope. When the weather stranded parents and kept school buses off the road, school children were fed and kept warm on cots in gymnasiums overnight. We celebrate school personnel for attending to the physical needs of students and maintaining calm for the children who undoubtedly were missing their parents.

Similar sub-zero conditions continue to affect thousands living in the middle, north, and eastern parts of the United States. As these frigid temperatures endanger vulnerable members of our community, especially those without shelter, local churches, businesses, and schools are opening their doors to accommodate their unhoused neighbors. Thousands of staff and volunteers have stepped up to prepare meals and gather blankets and cots to keep people safe from the elements.

These severe weather circumstances have certainly been taxing and they have exposed our vulnerability. It is good to see that we are looking out for each other. Let's keep doing it even after the snow has melted and the temperatures have warmed.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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